<u>**Executive Summary**</u>

Education Reform Focus Groups

The ideas proposed by the four focus groups represent a broad constituency of interest groups involved in the shaping of public education policy and programs in Hawaii. As both individuals and representatives of interest groups, members of the focus groups explored the following issues relevant to Hawaii's public education system:

Are education programs sufficiently funded;

What authorities and resources should be provided to ensure student achievement;

What role does the larger community play in public education; and

What policies and programs reflect best practices in developing quality schools and teachers.

In considering these issues, the Focus groups identified ideas within four focus areas – Education Finance; Roles & Responsibilities; Community Collaboration; and Quality Teaching/Schools to address these concerns. The issues identified by these focus groups should be viewed as a continuation of the discussion of educational reforms that were considered during the 2002 legislative session. Additionally, further feedback regarding these ideas will be solicited at other education forums such as the Civic Forum on Public Education, the Hawaii Business Roundtable, and the pending Pre-Kindergarten to Post-Secondary Education, "P-20", statewide initiative. While these focus groups primarily addressed Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) issues, there is general agreement that early childhood education initiatives must be considered in discussions of K-12 issues and proposals, especially in light of the P-20 initiative.

The Task Force members, in considering the issues in this Executive Summary, will have heard the voices of over sixty (60) individuals representing: the school community – students, parents, teachers, administrators; the Department of Education state administration; the Board of Education; private business and community organizations; University administrators and professors; public sector unions; and private schools. It is hoped that the Task Force, in making its determination about

which of these issues to pursue, will be supported by and become partners with these constituencies in achieving positive educational reforms.

Following is a brief summary of the ideas developed from discussions within each focus group. For additional information, please go to: www.

If you would like to give your feedback, please contact

Senator Norman Sakamoto

Representative Ken Ito

Education Finance

The key issue considered by the Education Finance focus group was – *"How can resources be linked to performance goals and student outcomes?"*

In considering this issue, focus group members reviewed current literature on education finance. The group found that most states have been compelled by lawsuits to develop state funding mechanisms to assure public schools receive an adequate level of state funds to support student achievement of state standards. The federal No Child Left Behind Act reinforces this by requiring states to develop statewide assessments of student achievement and to evaluate school's efforts to assure student achievement.

Based upon the discussions held with the members of the Education Finance focus group, three ideas were proposed:

Identify three successful schools in Hawaii as models of standards implementation and cost out their staffing and programs as the basis for adequate funding.

Consider other states' education finance models that link financial management systems with student outcomes.

Conduct a comparative study of Hawaii laws, BOE policies and funding levels to assess alignment of resources with requirements of Hawaii state standards and NCLB.

Roles & Responsibilities

The two key issues considered by the Roles & Responsibilities focus group were – *"What **authorities** should education stakeholders – BOE, Superintendent, school*

*staff, parents, and students - have in order to ensure that all students achieve standards; and What **resources** should education stakeholders have in order to ensure all students achieve standards."*

In considering these issues, focus group members were first asked to complete a survey to identify authority and resource issues. Once the survey responses were compiled, members met to further discuss and refine the issues, resulting in a rating of the most important issues. Based upon the discussion amongst these education stakeholders, the following unifying ideas were proposed.

With regard to **Authorities:**

Empower middle and high school students, and their parents, to take responsibility and be held accountable for their education.

Reward competent school staff, especially in hard-to-fill positions and provide assistance to marginal employees, dismissing those who are unwilling or unable to improve.

Redefine roles of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Education

Reduce student disruptions and disorderly conduct.

Establish a "Student Bill of Rights" to articulate student expectations regarding educational programs and learning environment.

With regard to **Resources:**

Create incentives for school-level and departmental personnel to perform well, providing resources to high performing schools, as well as targeted assistance to low-performing schools.

Support professional development for school-level staff to enhance their performance and to ensure only qualified teachers are in classrooms.

Improve access to computer technology and information as basic tools of learning and school management.

Encourage parental involvement in student's education.

Community Collaboration

The key issue considered by the Community Collaboration focus group was –
*"How can the community at-large, and particularly the business community, partner
with the public school system to support public education?"*

In considering this issue, focus group members first discussed the variety of
partnerships and programs presently available within the community. The members
agreed that it is imperative that the business community take a more pro-active role
in partnering with public education, in order to assure that a quality education is
provided to the students who become their future employees. Public education can
also be enhanced by business partners sharing insights about management and
leadership skills that can be used by school administrators.

Based upon the discussions with the members of the Community Collaboration
focus group, three ideas were proposed:

Build upon existing partnerships and create a statewide coordinating body to
prevent duplication and share effective models.

Recruit successful business partners to provide leadership training for
school administrators to provide them with essential management and leadership
tools.

Ensure that private sector contributions don't result in reductions or
supplanting public funding levels.

Quality Schools and Teachers

The key issue considered by the Quality Schools and Teachers focus group was
– "What best practices in the delivery of educational services can be adopted to
support quality schools and teachers?" Several proposals for consideration by the
focus group, were presented, including: coordination within a school complex of the
length of school day, week, and year; establishing smaller school and class size;
evaluation of schools beyond student assessments; sequencing of curriculum from
kindergarten through grade 12; and reconfiguring administrative structures to adopt
a complex-based service delivery model.

There was general agreement that school complexes – elementary schools
feeding into middle schools feeding into one high school - is a promising model in
terms of developing sequential curriculum, aligning teacher professional development

programs with complex-based curriculum, and adopting common reforms related to school size and school calendars. Complex-based learning communities also allow for the adoption of an accountability system that can assess the effectiveness of not only single schools, but also how the curriculum is integrated and sequenced throughout the complex. The focus group also proposed the establishment of a statewide council to interpret data collected on students and schools to assist in decision-making on educational policy and programs.